History made: First 'VAR' decision in table tennis!

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History was made at the ITTF World Tour Grand Finals in China today with the first use of the Table Tennis Review (TTR) system which is being trialled at the event.

Lin Gaoyuan of China was called for a service fault in the men's doubles match as he and Liang Jingkun took on Chen Chien-An & Chuang Chih-Yuan of Chinese Taipei.

With the score at 1-1 and 10-9 to the Chinese pair in game three, Lin appealed against the call. The technology revealed that the angle of the serve was indeed illegal as called by the umpire – the measured angle was 52 degress rather than 30 or less – and the score went to 10-10.

You can watch the process unfold in the video below:

Thedecision did not ultimately affect the outcome as the Chinese pair took the third game 13-11 and went on to win the quarter-final match 3-1.

The TTR system sees each player (or pair in doubles) awarded two challenges per match, which have to be issued before the next point. If a review is unsuccessful, it is lost – but it is retained if successful, similar to the set-up in international cricket. Opposing players cannot request TTR if they think a fault has not been called against an opponent.

TTR has ball-tracking technology which can check for edge balls and service nets, while multi-camera slow motion and measurement are used to determine ball toss angle and height at the service.

Slow motion review is also used to determine ball hiding at service, service toss below or inside playing surface, palm not open, striking ball inside playing surface, ball hitting part of the body and ball striking non-net assembly parts.

The TTR technology is provided by Chinese firm RigourTech, which was selected by the ITTF following a tender

process earlier this year. Three successful days of behind-the-scenes tests were conducted at the 2019 ITTF Men's World Cup from November 29, before the 'live' use of the system at the Grand Finals. Subject to successful implementation, TTR could feature at more top-tier events in 2020.